

House Passes H.R. 1319, the Informed P2P User Act

Barrow's bill will make Internet users aware of security risks associated with P2P file sharing programs

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. House of Representatives today passed H.R. 1319, the Informed P2P User Act, a bipartisan bill introduced by Congressman Barrow (GA-12), along with Congresswoman Bono Mack (CA-45) and Congressman Joe Barton (TX-6). The legislation addresses a major threat to data security by making P2P file sharing program users aware of the risks involved when they log on.

Many people have P2P software on their personal computers for file sharing. These programs are one of the fastest-growing uses of Internet technology, yet many of these programs can make ALL of a computer's files available to anyone else in the same P2P network. Personal information from tax returns and medical records has been stolen as the result of inadvertent disclosure through P2P software.

P2P software has been implicated in a security breach involving Marine One, the helicopter used by President Obama. Another recent high profile case involved the leaking of a confidential congressional memo by a House staff member who had P2P file sharing software on her computer.

"We're constantly seeing news stories about folks accidentally giving out sensitive information using P2P file sharing programs," said Barrow. "Not only can it be a personal risk, but it's become a matter of national security. Folks need to be aware that, when they access these programs, anyone else on the network can invade their personal files."

Specifically, the Informed P2P User Act:

- Ensures that P2P file sharing programs cannot be installed without providing clear notice and obtaining informed consent of the authorized computer user.

- Makes it unlawful to prevent the authorized user of a computer from:

- 1) Blocking the installation of a peer-to-peer file sharing program, or

2) Disabling or removing any peer-to-peer file sharing program.

- Gives enforcement authority to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

"I'm pleased that the House has passed the Informed P2P Act," said Barrow. "This bill will help make sure that folks who use P2P file sharing programs not only know about the security risks, but also can easily remove the programs if they want."

H.R. 1319 now moves to the U.S. Senate for its consideration.

Congressman Barrow's floor statement follows:

Madame Speaker: I rise today in support of H.R. 1319, the Informed Peer-to-Peer User Act which I introduced with Representatives Bono Mack and Barton.

We live in a world where digital technology connects people in ways that make all kinds of collaboration and innovation possible. There's no question about the benefits of this technology - what I'm worried about are the costs. This technology has made us all more productive, but it's also made it easier for others to invade our personal records, and reveal private information about us and our families, that we would never choose to disclose.

This bill will protect consumers by making Internet users more aware of the inherent privacy and security risks associated with peer-to-peer file sharing programs. All too often, folks who connect to these networks don't even realize that their most personal and private files are visible to everyone else on the network at any time. They're posting their tax returns, financial records, and personal messages on the Internet, and they don't even know it. Recent reports have shown that peer-to-peer software was implicated in a security breach involving Marine One - the helicopter used by President Obama - and another high profile case involved Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer.

There are all kinds of legitimate peer-to-peer software packages out there, and we're working real hard to make sure that none of those are impacted or limited by what's proposed in this legislation, and committee members are going to continue to make sure the scope of this bill doesn't interfere with the productive capacity of this technology.

But this bipartisan bill is critical to protecting the privacy and Internet safety of American families. We have truth in lending and truth in labeling. I think its time we have truth in networking. I want to thank Congresswoman Bono Mack and Congressman Barton for working with me on this important legislation, and I urge my colleagues to vote in support of the Informed Peer-to-Peer User Act.

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Contact: Jane Brodsky, (202)
225-2823

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